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markings which look like KIX. There are 7 more behind the X. Belly has 15 rows of dots, having 3 dots in each row. Behind the pouch the markings are more or less met by those of the back. There are 25 bars in all on the male and 22 on the female.

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REVIEW OF BLANCHARD'S REVISION OF THE KING SNAKES

The American King Snakes of the genus *Lampropeltis* have always been a sharp thorn in the side of every herpetologist who has dealt with them. Five North American genera of snakes have particularly needed revision. *Thamnophis* has been reduced to order by Ruthven. Now, Blanchard of the University of Michigan, has helped us similarly with an extremely useful revision of *Lampropeltis*. *Elaphe*, *Natrix*, and *Pituophis* still await biographers, although the genus last named offers no such teasing problem as the others.

The sort of revision before me now is preëminently the American form of contribution to the literature of systematic zoölogy and one in which American workers may well take pride. Comparisons are never very well worth while and Boulenger's handling of the *Lacertidae* and of some of the sections of the genus *Rana* is masterly in the extreme. Nevertheless, Blanchard's paper, although almost the first contribution to science with which he has favored us, still stands forth as certainly as useful in its arrangement as any revision which has hereto appeared. One particular feature impressed me most happily and that is the recognition of possibly doubtful forms under distinct headings where they can not be proved definitely to be synonyms of some other type. In the past, the "lumping" of doubtful forms has brought more misery into the lives of

workers on reptiles than any other single custom. The number of new types here described is small. The last word, however, has probably not been said and Blanchard shows us or postulates where novelties may still be expected to turn up.

Practically all of the material in this country has been available for his study. The result is the recognition of three principal types or superspecies with two other isolated forms of doubtful affinity. Thus, *getulus* stands broken into eleven forms, species and subspecies. *Calligaster* appears with three related forms all given full specific rank and *triangulum* with thirteen species and subspecies within its limits. Garman's *mexicana* and Brown's *alterna* do not seem to fit into the system and may be considered as offshoots whose annectant relatives have disappeared in the past.

It is hardly worth while to attempt to summarize Blanchard's conclusions. He has done this quite satisfactorily himself, while comments or criticisms which might be offered would probably be equally futile. It is certain that after the obvious care and industry with which Mr. Blanchard has prepared his review, taken in connection with the fact that he has seen more material than any other one worker, that, therefore, he now knows more about King Snakes than anyone else.

It seems, however, that he might have localized the area of origin perhaps a little more closely than when he says "in all probability each of these groups [meaning the three great superspecies] originated in some portion of the region between Texas and Nicaragua." He then goes on to present ten criteria for determination of centers of dispersal, some worthy of high consideration, others of certainly very little value. All, however, point to "the Southwest" as being the area where original differentiation occurred. We would have gone a bit further and would have suggested the highlands of Central Mex-

ico with their northward extensions as having been probably the region where most active development of these and other types as well took place. We would, also, have suggested reducing in size many of the full page diagrams for comparison of numbers of ventral plates and cross-bands for, while no intention has ever been implied to pad the excellently edited publications of the U. S. National Museum, nevertheless, American systematic work has captious critics abroad who might easily misinterpret diagrams so expansive.

One of the most interesting features brought out and one worthy of special examination by those other than professional students of herpetology, is the study of the variation in the dorsal rows of scales where it is shown that the facts insisted upon by Ruthven in his "Revision of *Thamnophis*" are largely substantiated in this study and the intercalation of additional dorsal rows and their loss is subject to perfectly definite rule. Indeed, one calls to mind subconsciously Jackson's admirable studies showing how exact is the mode whereby added rows of plates appear with mathematical precision in the immobile tests of *Echini* whereas on the snakes' excessively flexible bodies scale rows are added with similar precision. The fact, however, that the number of rows of scales is correlated with the size of the body is at sharp variance with the condition in the *Echini* where the number of rows of plates is an evidence of the evolutionary development of the type and bears no relation to size.

I may be hoped that these remarks will serve their purpose in simply calling to the attention of the now very considerable number of persons who are students of American reptiles, that a new tool of great usefulness may be put into their chests.

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